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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are given to aid doctoral candidates in the selection of a specific career position within the field of teacher education. Various considerations relative to employment at differing types of universities are examined. University philosophy, monetary considerations, communication channels within the department, faculty relationships, relationships between the university and the local public school system, accreditation status, self-study programs, pofessional writing and publications requirements for professors, and several other factors influencing the future work environment of doctoral students are discussed. (LH)

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CAREER HINTS FOR THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE INTERESTED IN TEACHER EDUCATION

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Running Head: Career Hints

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Career Hints for the Doctoral Candidate Interested in Teacher Education

Doctoral programs are designed to provide students with experiences in several professional areas, including publication skills, college teaching, research, administration, instructional materials, statistics, evaluation and several others. Each of these professional skills has utility for various career fields within the exceptional child "umbrella." These career fields include employment opportunities offered by local school systems, institutions of higher education, and state education agencies. Of necessity, doctoral students spend more time preparing for completion of their degrees than in selecting a particular type of employment. Yet their acceptance of a specific position will probably have a profound effect on their professional careers. The choice of employment is even more dramatic when it is considered that most decisions of this nature are made within a relatively short time frame. The purpose of this article is to summarize various considerations relative to employment in one specific career field for educators--teacher education--that doctoral candidates may desire to review prior to acceptance of employment.

Potential Areas to Consider Relative to Employment in Teacher Education

University Philosophy: The philosophy of a particular university dictates to a large extent the spectrum of job responsibilities that will be required of faculty members. Small schools tend to be more conservative than large institutions. Travel funds, research activities, professional publication, field based work, consultancies, interest in federal grants, and other areas of interest external to the university

are usually limited in the smaller schools. The person who has been highly motivated for several years may find the conservative schools to provide a lack of intellectual stimulation. In addition, secretarial assistance may be non-existant. Faculty salaries vary immensely among various schools and are not likely to be related to the size of the university. Many small schools have a higher beginning and average salary, but do not compare favorably with the large schools at the top of the salary schedule. Rank is also easier to obtain in the smaller schools, but does not provide the prestige that a larger school offers. For the faculty member who has the capacity for self-actualization and self-motivation and enjoys a full range of activities in addition to those of an academic nature, the more conservative institution has numerous advantages. Location of the school as well as the availability of cultural pursuits in the locality are also important considerations for many people.

Budgets: The student should question his/her involvement in budgetary activities. Considerations include faculty input in formulating and expending the budget, nature and amount of specific line items (especially travel), "hard" vs. "soft" monies, and the extent of personal responsibility if mistakes are made.

Federal Grants: Federal money can be extremely useful to a teacher education program, particularly for non-salary items. Unfortunately, federal monies usually are for a limited time duration and therefore the doctoral candidate should ascertain in advance the extent to which he/she will be paid on "hard" money and whether or not he/she will be employed on a tenure track position. ("Hard" monies are recurring monies, usually appropriated by the State, that can usually be depended on annually, whereas

"soft" monies are usually federal in nature and are for a specific time frame.)

Channels of Communication: This rather obscure item may appear to be relatively insignificant, but it has a direct impact on the capability of faculty members to achieve their personal ambitions. Few activities succeed without permission and encouragement from the appropriate institutional authorities. Personalities and philosophies of the administrative personnel should be thoroughly questioned prior to acceptance of employment. The extent to which routine decisions are made by the department chairperson versus the Dean is also an important consideration.

Faculty Relationships: Life in an institution of higher education could be utopian in nature if everyone made a sincere effort to work together and were appreciative of each other's efforts. Such is not the case as a "pecking order" usually is intact and numerous relationships (both positive and negative) already exist at the time the new doctoral student accepts initial employment. Ascertaining the "status quo", identifying the "dead wood" (frequently full professors), and defining one's role are important considerations. Young faculty members are particularly vulnerable and are often viewed as "young turks" who are attempting to make a name for themselves. (This is particularly true in smaller institutions.) A lack of experience due to age can be partially overcome through extra effort, enthusiasm, and a sound judgment.

Public School Relationships: The doctoral candidate should make every effort to ascertain the relationship of the teacher education program with local school systems. The willingness of local schools to provide practicum and student teaching sites, to allow research, and to share resources is a valuable and necessary asset of successful teacher education programs.

Accreditation/Self-Studies: Prospective faculty members should determine the various accreditations held by the employing institution. Accreditation is important for a teacher education program, both in terms of interstate certification reciprocity and in the constructive internal changes that occur as a result of the institutional self-study. A good person for a doctoral candidate to interview during a visit to campus would be the individual who was personally responsible for coordinating the last accreditation self-study (preferably the NCATE study-National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education).

Professional Writing/Publication: The "publish or perish" syndrome is prevalent in many institutions of higher education. Others use publication as a criteria for promotion or in attaining graduate faculty status. In some programs publication is not a consideration and is even viewed negatively due to jealousy or because it deemphasizes the institution's emphasis on instruction. The prospective faculty member should question the amount of publication done by existing faculty members, and particularly of program administrators.

CEC/SCEC: The professional involvement of students and faculty can be ascertained to some degree by viewing the activity level of the local CEC chapter(s).

Evaluation: Evaluation is a multi-faceted activity that should be occurring within a teacher education program at many levels. Evaluation should address: (1) the program, (2) the students in the program, (3) students who have graduated, (4) the views of employers of students, (5) specific courses, (6) faculty performance and (7) other specific checkpoints such as student teaching and practicum experiences. The prospective employee can review the teacher education program's interest in evaluation as well as internal changes that have occurred as a result of evaluation, by reviewing the last NCATE study. This report is available in the library or in various administrative offices within the university.

Program Development: The student should question the teacher education program's institutions pursuant to future program development. For example, what new curricula areas will be added (i.e. gifted, psychometrics, etc.) and when? The student should relate the answers to his personal areas of interest and professional involvement.

Relationship with State Education Agency: The relationship of the teacher education program's faculty and administration with the state education agency is critically important. As the state education agency is generally the center of communication in the State and provides a wide variety of resources, a good working relationship should exist if the program is to properly develop.

Student Recruitment: How are students recruited into the program? How early in their teacher education program can students become more involved in their respective major field(s)? The doctoral candidate should review the university's catalogue and various brochures as well as interview various faculty members and students in order to formulate a realistic view of this important aspect of the program. An excellent program has limited utility if there are insufficient numbers of students enrolled in the courses.

Scheduling: This is frequently an area that is overlooked by the prospective faculty member who is more likely to inquire about what he/she may teach than to ask when the courses will be taught. Many unsuspecting new faculty members begin their careers teaching four nights a week or with a preponderance of 7:30 a.m. classes. The "pecking order" may be more visible in scheduling than in other areas. The number and location of off-campus courses should also be considered.

Advisement: This is an area of responsibility that is addressed differently in various institutions. In some schools, advisement is a major aspect of a faculty member's work load, while in others it is not considered as part of the load. The amount of time required by advisement, advisement procedures, and peak advisement periods should be ascertained prior to employment.

Library Resources: Every job interview should include a thorough visit to the library and instructional media center in an effort to ascertain the quality of institutional resources supporting the specific employment area the individual is considering. The last NCATE self-study is also a good source for determining institutional resources.

Teaching Responsibilities: A normal work load could be 15 semester hours for undergraduate faculty or 12 semester hours for graduate faculty with proportional reductions for additional responsibilities. However, many teacher education programs expect the additional responsibilities without reducing the work load. Honest discussions with administrators and faculty should provide valuable information in this area.

Faculty Involvement in Decision Making: In some universities, the faculty has major input in the decision making process, while in others the faculty is rarely, if ever, consulted. The doctoral student will receive some insight in this area by noticing whether recruitment efforts are being conducted by a faculty search committee or by a single administrator. (Note: Some faculty members prefer not to get involved in decision making and would prefer to limit their institutional responsibilities to those of an instructional nature.)

Office Hours and Committee Work: This item relates to the work load discussed earlier as well as to the amount of time required of the faculty for non-teaching responsibilities. In some teacher education programs, service to the university is considered as a criteria for promotion. The prospective faculty member who is interested in research and consultancies should particularly question the amount of time required by these responsiblities.

Consultancy Policy: Professionals who are interested in maintaining contact with the "external world" frequently pursue consultant work. Institutional policy differs widely as to the amount of emphasis given

to consultancies. The doctoral candidate should determine university policy on consultancies and weigh such policy against personal goals and interests.

Professional Development Opportunities: Universities that do not encourage professional development of faculty are more common than might be anticipated. Most teacher education programs have limited travel budgets, particularly if federal monies are not available. The amount of institutional emphasis on professional development of faculty is directly related to the amount of travel monies budgeted. This is definitely an area that prospective employees will need to consider.

A final recommendation for doctoral condidates relative to fostering employment is to develop a sophisticated and detailed vita that presents a thorough picture of the person's background, training, and experience. In addition to the vita (which should contain a picture), the prospective employee should maintain a file box containing the finished products that reflect credit on the person's professional endeavors. This file should contain such items as published and unpublished articles, accreditation studies, federal and state grant proposals (funded and not funded), newspaper articles, and other evidence of success.

The aforementioned areas of responsibility that a prospective doctoral candidate should consider prior to employment in a teacher education program are not inclusive. Each individual's personal objectives, specific interests, and professional skills should be considered in view of respective institutional policy.